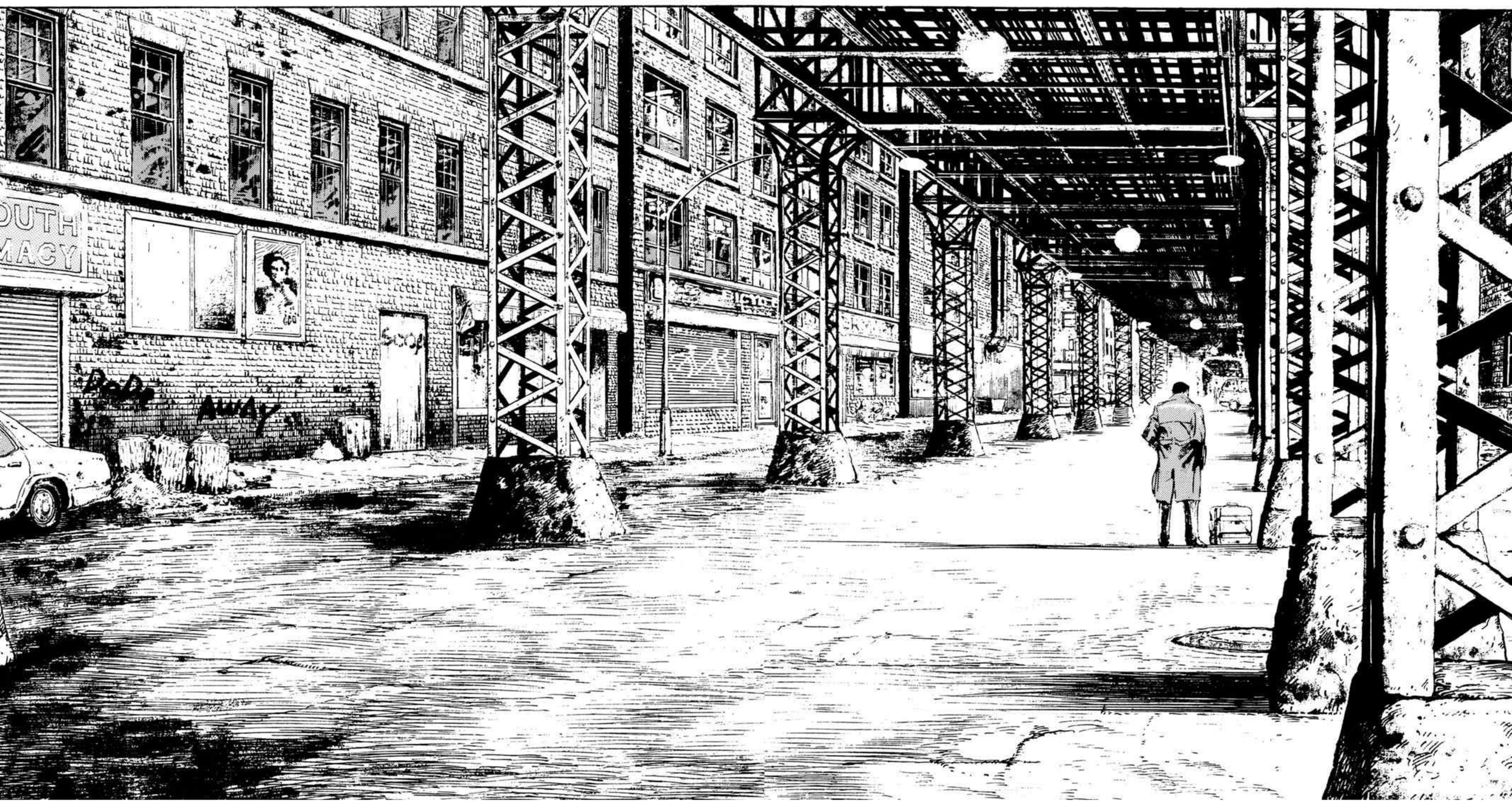
THE WRO NG MAN



WE'RE LATE!
HEY! MOVE THIS HEAP!
tunk
tunk

RRRRRRMMMMMMMM

...HE'S NOT SOMEONE WE WANT TO ANGER.

RRRRRMMMMMMMM

GUESS IT'S BETTER THAN MAKING MY CUSTOMERS WAIT...

DAMN... HALF AN HOUR EARLY.

...HELL WITH IT. I'M GONNA GRAB A BEER.

THERE!

JUST LIKE THEY SAID...! IT *WAS* 4:30, RIGHT?

ahem. SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING, MR. DUKE TOGO.

SKREEE

WHAT?

UM...

I'M GINO... THIS IS BRICK.

PARDON HIM, MR. TOGO.

?!

SLAP!

...INSIDE.

PLEASE ...

!

SEE, BRICK, YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT MR. TOGO HERE. HE'S GOT A THING ABOUT THAT. NEVER SHAKES HANDS. PUTS HIM AT RISK.

??

??

OKAY! WE GOT OFF ON A BAD FOOT, MAYBE...OR BAD HAND--*SHIT*, HERE I AM NOW, TRYIN' TO SHAKE IT, TOO. JUST GET IN, HUH?

BRICK! GET BACK IN, YO!

OH, SORRY, SORRY, SEE, NOW *I'M* FORGETTING. HE DON'T GET INTO CARS FIRST EITHER.

RIGHT.

tunk tunk tunk

NICE CAR!

RRRR

RRRRRRMMMMM

RRRRRR

...OH, THAT!

OMAHA?

WE'VE BEEN HEARING FROM ALL OVER THE PLACE! LIKE THAT JOB YOU DID IN OMAHA. FANTASTIC!

LIKE TO *THINK*, HE SAYS! NO NEED TO BE MODEST! WE'VE HEARD ABOUT YOUR RECORD!

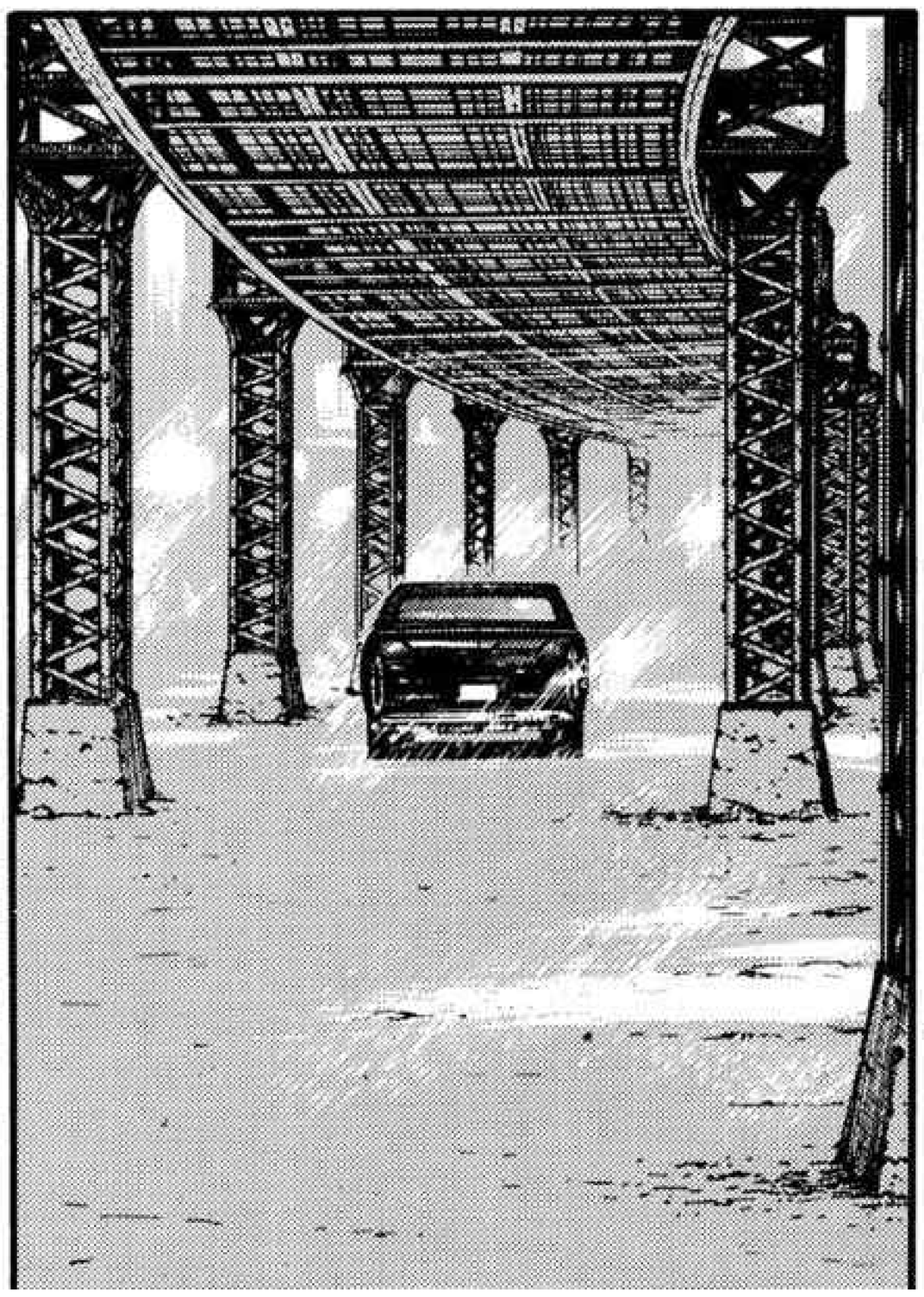
I LIKE TO THINK I DO MY JOB RIGHT.

WELL, IT WAS FOR A VERY NEEDY CLIENT, BUT I MANAGED TO SUIT HIS REQUIREMENTS.

AND I JUST KNOW WE'RE GONNA DO GOOD BUSINESS TOGETHER, MISTER ***DUKE TOGO!***

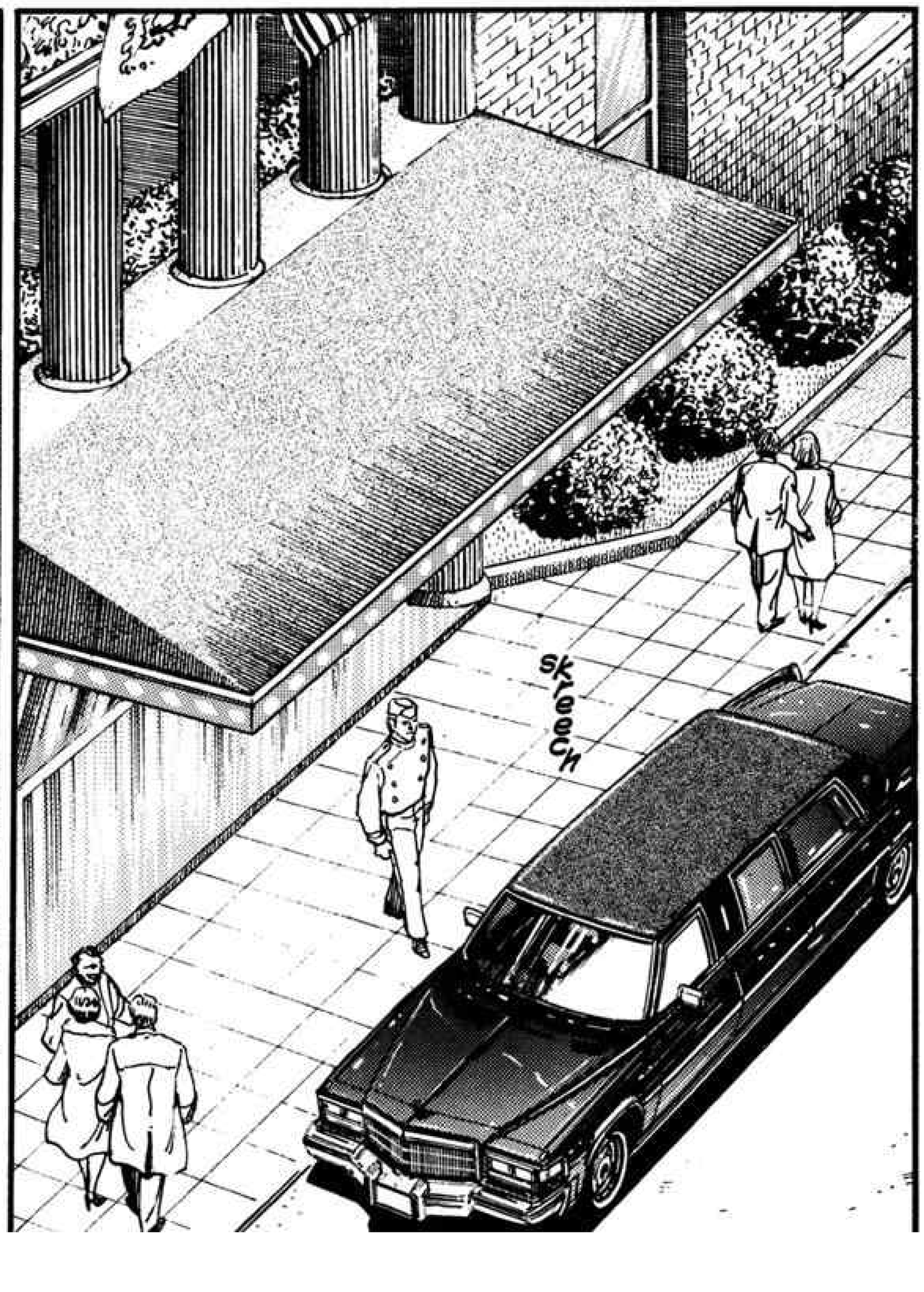
THAT'S JUST IT! WE NEED A *PRO!*

WELL, YOU KNOW... SATISFYING THE CUSTOMER... IT'S ALL PART OF BEING A PRO-FESSIONAL.



*...JUST AS LONG AS HE WRITES **TONY TOGO** ON THE CHECK...*

Chicago, USA



...I'LL TAKE IT UP MYSELF.

NO...

NICE ROOM!

?

LIKE YOU ALWAYS ASK FOR.

A HOTEL THAT'S NICE, BUT NOT TOO FLASHY...ROOM ON THE TOP FLOOR NEAR THE EMERGENCY EXIT...

THANKS. I'M A BIT TIRED OUT FROM THE BUS RIDE.

WE'LL TALK ABOUT THE JOB THEN.

SEE YOU AT 9 A.M. TOMOR-ROW.

SURE, HE *LOOKS* LIKE A SCHMUCK-- BUT YOU FEEL HIS GREATNESS IN THE ***SMALL*** GESTURES!

...HE'S NOT THE KINDA GUY I FIGURED. I WOULDA PEGGED 'IM FOR A TRAVELLING SALESMAN!

YOU WANNA MOVE UP IN THIS ORGANIZATION, BRICK, GOTTA LEARN TO SPOT THE MARKS OF A TRUE PRO-FESSIONAL!

...BUT I WOULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY WITH A MOTEL 6.

CUSTOMER'S A LITTLE WEIRD...

yaawwwwn

I'M GONNA DO A GOOD JOB FOR THIS GUY...

ROBINSON ELECTRIC TOOL

ROBINSON ELECTRIC TOO

schmorr schmorr schmorr

!!

?

...SHALL WE DO IT NOW?

OR...

SHOULD I TAKE A SHOWER?

WH-WHO ARE *YOU*?!

I'M NOT LETTING GO OF THIS CLIENT... EVER.

whew!

...SO HAVE FUN.

I'VE BEEN PAID WELL...

I ALWAYS HEARD HE WAS ON FIRE BEFORE A JOB. IS THIS IT?

IT'S JUST *HALFTIME*, BABY!

OF COURSE I'M HAVING FUN...

...I'M KIND OF LIKE A GUN FOR HIRE.

WELL...

SO WHAT'S YOUR STORY GOING TO BE? I SAW YOUR CASE...YOU GOING TO TRY TO SELL ME SOMETHING, MR. TOGO?

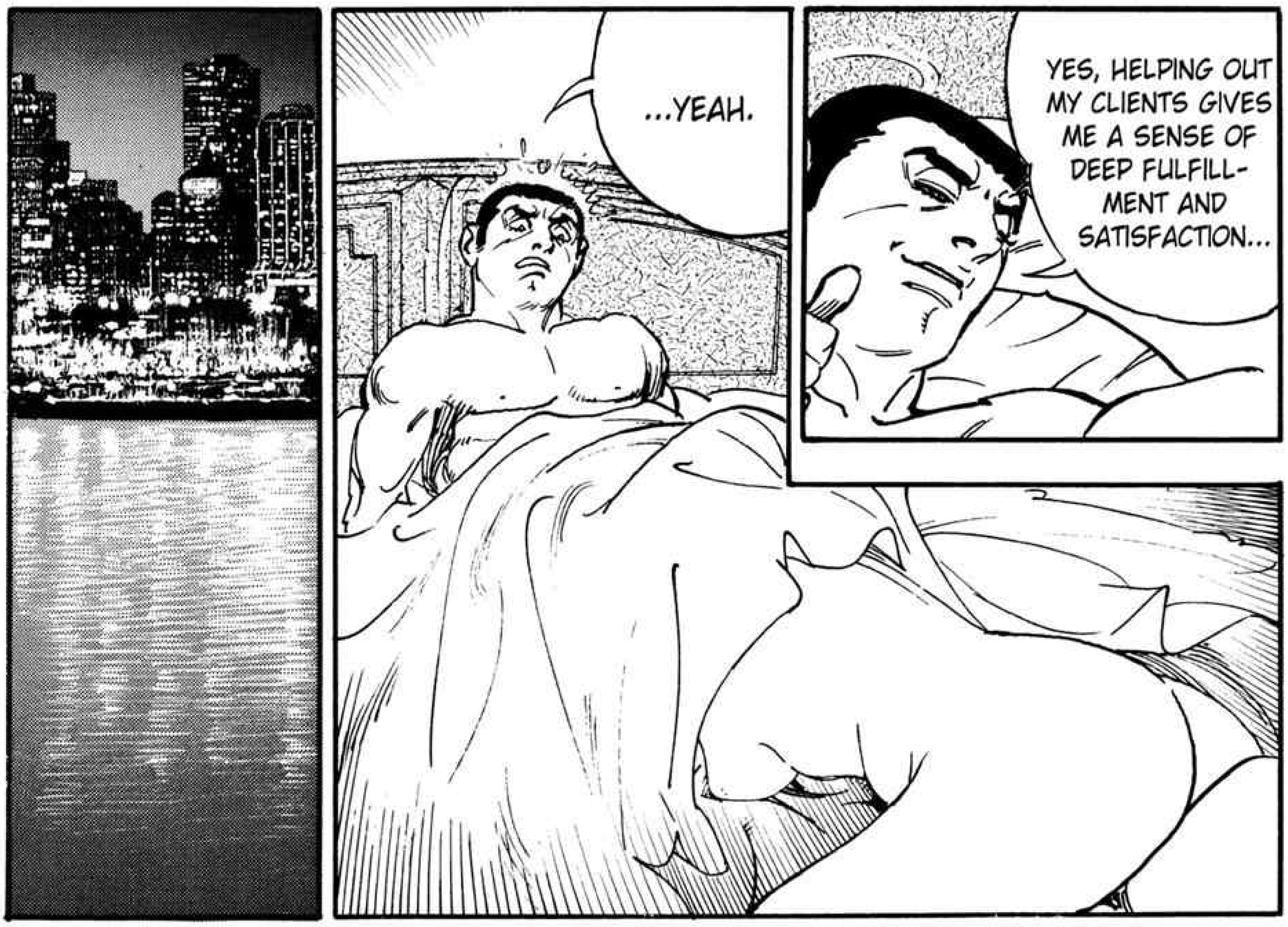
...THE CLIENT'S REALLY GENEROUS.

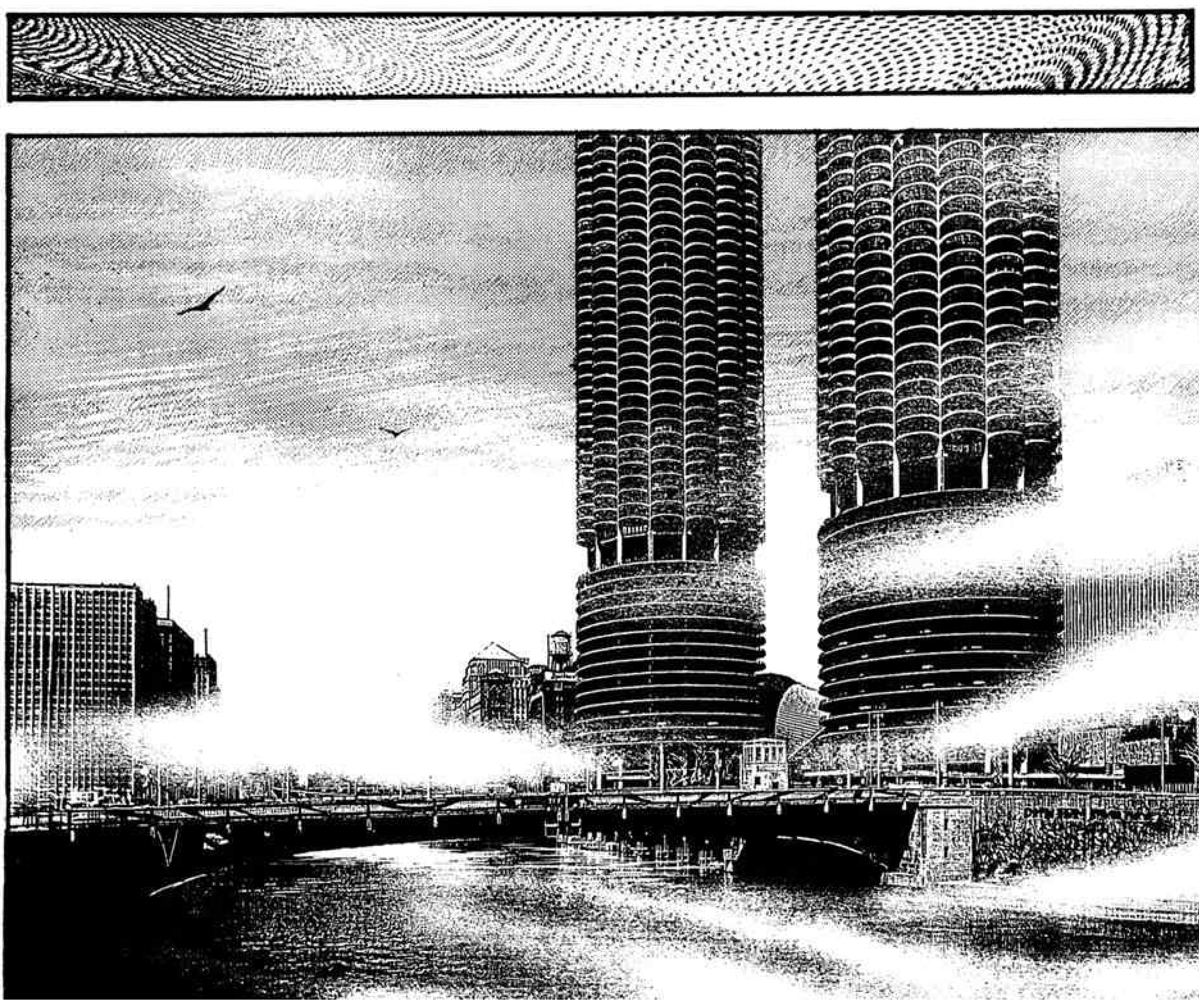
BUT FIRST THIS ROOM, AND NOW YOU...

...THAT'S SOME STORY.

HMM...

A TROUBLESHOOTER IN THIS TRADE. I CARRY MY TOOLS WITH ME. AND IF SOMEONE'S GOT A PROBLEM WITH MY TOOLS? WELL, YOU MIGHT SAY I SERVICE WHAT I SELL.


...YEAH.
YES, HELPING OUT MY CLIENTS GIVES ME A SENSE OF DEEP FULFILL-MENT AND SATISFACTION...



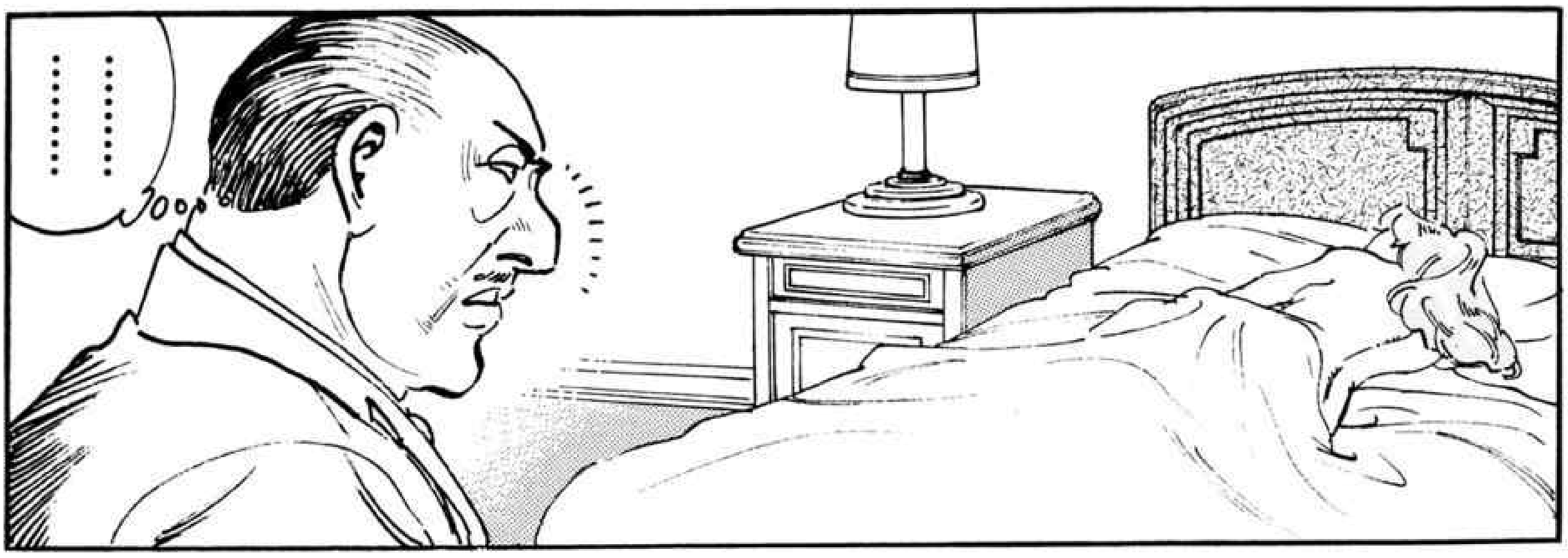
ffffsssshhhhhhh

SHIT... FORGOT TO SHAVE.

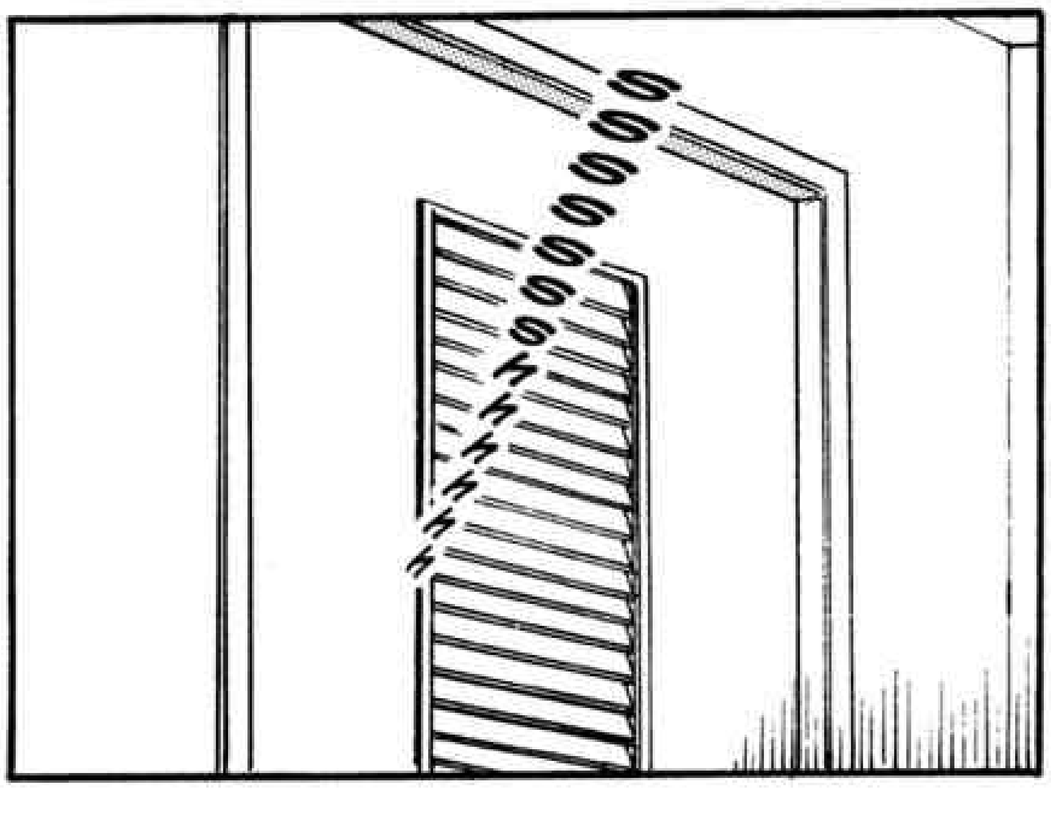
SSSS

?
ooo

ドドド!
ドドド!


.....
.....
ooo

MR.
TOGO
...?

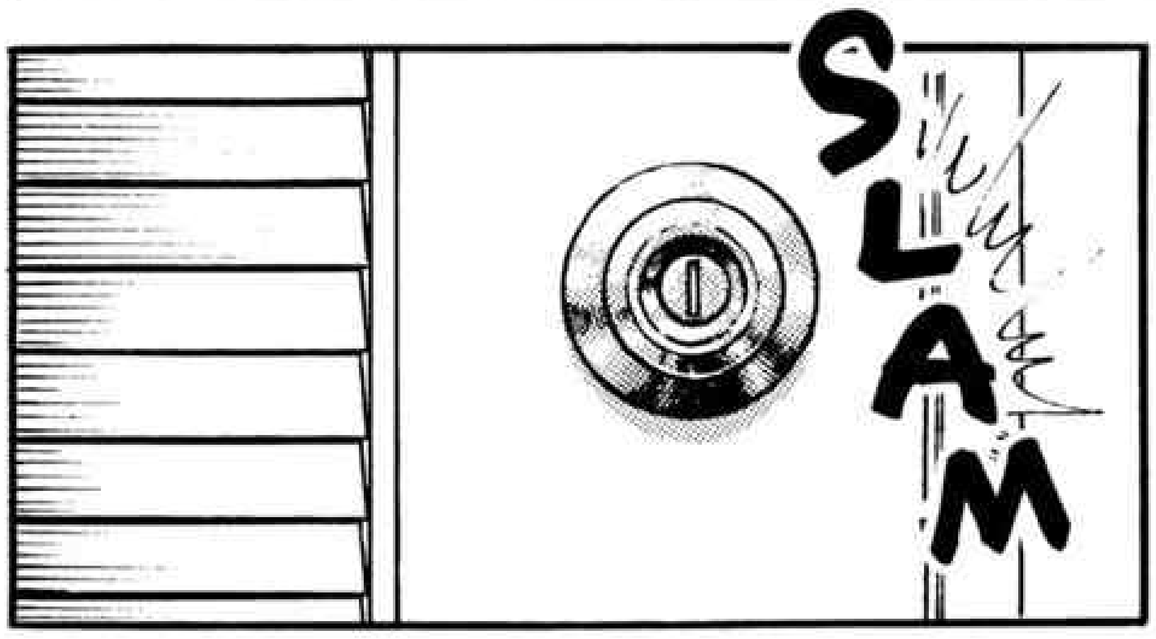

SSSSSSSSHHHHHH

SSSSSSSSHHHHHH

SSSS

000b

JUST WAIT IN THE ROOM, OKAY?
SORRY...I'M A LITTLE HUNG OVER.
EH-EH- EXCUSE ME...IT'S N-NINE O'CLOCK, YOU SEE...


SLAM

YEAH! Y-YEAH.
.....
oooooo...

WEIRD I CAN DEAL WITH... NOT FREAKS, TOO.
...o

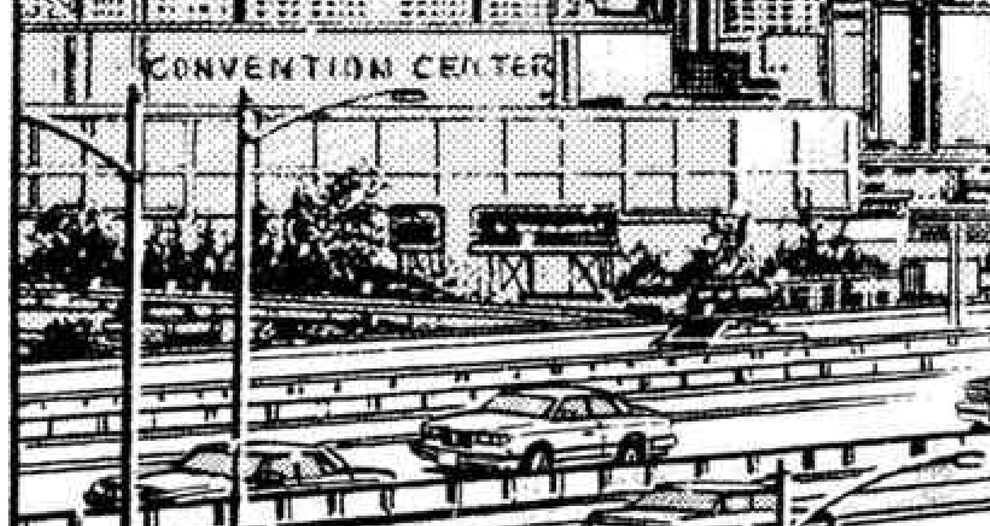
whew!
SSSS

...AND LOOK AT THAT! MUSTA WORE HER OUT, JUST LIKE THEY SAY...

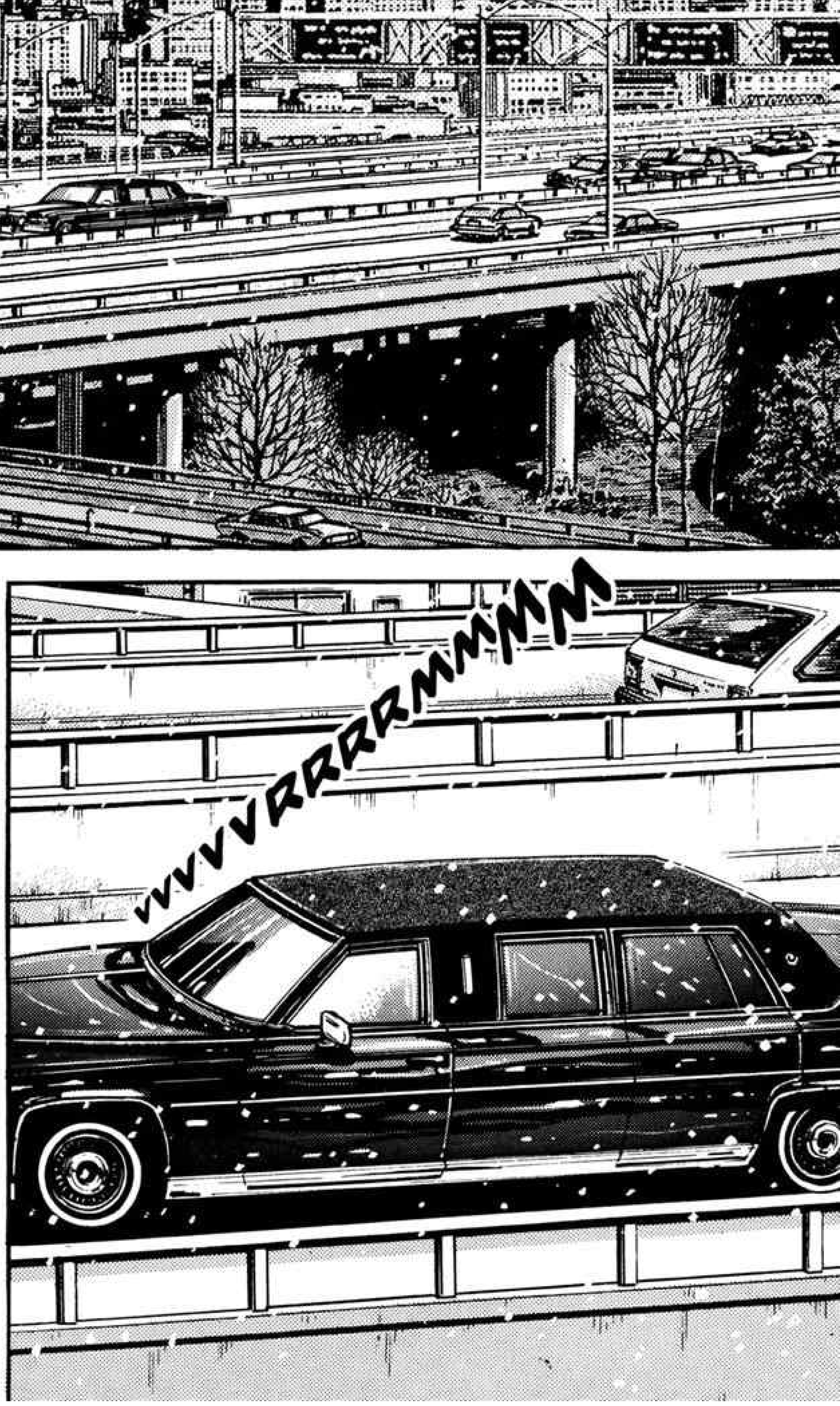
BUT IT'S HIM ALL RIGHT. LOOK AT THAT AMBUSH I JUST WALKED INTO...

SHIT, GOOD THING I'M A CLIENT... BRICK GOT ME THINKING...WHAT IF WE DID PICK UP THE WRONG MAN...?!

CONVENTION CENTER


RIGHT. NOW HERE'S WHAT WE WERE HOPING YOU COULD DO FOR US...

NICE CIGAR!


VVVRRRRMMMM

WE GAVE HIM A CALL LAST NIGHT...LET HIM KNOW WE'D MADE THE RENDEZVOUS WITH YOU.

...YEAH, WELL, MR. GRACKLE IS KIND OF COUNTING ON THAT.

DON'T WORRY. I'M GOING TO DO MY BEST FOR YOU GUYS...

SO HE DON'T LIKE PEOPLE STEPPIN' ONTO HIS TURF.

JIMMY "THE PICKAXE" GRACKLE. CHICAGO, DETROIT, SHEBOYGAN. CONTROLS THE WHOLE MIDWEST, BASICALLY.

MR...?

PEOPLE SUCH AS VLADISLAV "THE BEAR" ZAGIPNOTIZIRO-VAVSHEMUSYA.

??

ANYWAY, IT WAS CUTE AS LONG AS HE WAS JUST SELLIN' PCP HERE. BUT NOW HE'S COME TO TOWN...WITH *EIGHTY KEYS* OF CHINA WHITE.

THEY SAY HE WENT BALD AT CHERNOBYL. RUMOR HAS IT HE MAKES HIS WIGS OUT OF THE HAIR OF HIS ENEMIES. YOU CAN SEE THE TINT AIN'T RIGHT.

AND YOU'RE GONNA BLOW THAT DEAL...AND THAT ROOSKIE'S *BRAINS*...ALL OVER THE ***CONCRETE!***

THERE'S A DEAL GOING DOWN TODAY.

.....

.....

...MR. GOLGO--

HERE'S THE LAYOUT OF THE SITE. TAKE A GOOD LOOK...

...THIS GUY'S ***CRAZY.***

DID I SAY ***FREAK...?***

HUH? YEAH, HM. GO ON.

...MR. TOGO.

OH! I MEAN...

HE'S NOT A HUMAN BEING... HE'S A ***KILLING MACHINE!***

LOOK AT HIS EYES GO BLANK... HE'S ALREADY IN HIS OWN WORLD!

NOW HE CAN'T EVEN GET MY ***LAST*** *NAME STRAIGHT.*

LIKE WALLS, SEE.

SO.

PAYS OFF THE ATTENDANT TO CLOSE ONE FLOOR. PARKS TWO TRUCKS UP THERE AND DOES THE DEAL BETWEEN THEM.

THE BEAR'S GOT AN M.O. FOR THESE DEALS. THERE'S A CERTAIN PARKING TOWER HE USES, THE KIND WITH AN ELEVATOR FOR THE CARS, Y'KNOW?

5F

ER

NO ONE'S GONNA SPOT HIM, SO NO ONE'S GONNA HIT HIM, RIGHT?

BUT I WAS THINKIN'...IF SOMEONE WAS RIDING UP ON THE ELEVATOR... THE ANGLE WOULD BE JUST ENOUGH ...

N-NO... IT'LL... IT'LL DO.

...DIDN'T MEAN NO OFFENSE, MISTER...

OH...I MEAN, IF YOU ALREADY HAD A PLAN...

HM?

SEE, THAT'S WHAT I TOLD MYSELF. ONLY HE *COULD* DO IT.

IT'LL WORK? YOU REALLY THINK SO?

"BEE-HIVE"?

...'COURSE, IF IT *DID* STOP, YOU'D GET TURNED INTO A BEEHIVE.

MAKE THE SHOT, I MEAN. THE ELEVATOR CAN GO BY, BUT IT WON'T STOP. THEY'LL HAVE THAT FLOOR LOCKED OUT FOR THE DEAL.

.....

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

?

C-CAN'T SEE ANYTHING THE MATTER. PLAN SOUNDS PERFECT.

YOU'LL HAVE ONLY A SECOND OR TWO TO FIRE AS YOU PASS THE FIFTH FLOOR.

WHEN THE BEAR SHOWS... I SIGNAL YOU TO GO DOWN IN THE ELEVATOR.

SO WE'LL HAVE YOU WAITING IN A CAR ON THE TOP FLOOR BEFORE THE PRINCIPALS ARRIVE.

IT MAY SEEM IMPOSSIBLE...

YOU HAVE TO DO YOUR JOB IN AN INSTANT, TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE TRUCKS, THE TARGET, AND ALL THE BODYGUARDS THAT'LL BE AROUND HIM.

.....

Oooo

OH, YEAH. THIS IS THE ICEMAN. NEVER STRAYS MORE THAN FOUR FEET FROM THE BEAR.

...THAT'S YOUR SPECIALTY.

...BUT THEN...

5F

2R

BE CAREFUL. HE'S A CRACK SHOT. ALMOST AS GOOD AS YOU, THEY SAY.

HE'D LIKE YOU TO KILL THE BEAR WITH HIS PERSONAL PIECE. I KNOW YOU'VE GOT YOUR OWN, BUT...

MR. GRACKLE HAS A SPECIAL REQUEST.

.....

Ooo.

NICE... GLOCK!

...I WON'T BE LONG. JUST GOTTA USE THE BATHROOM.

I...

SKLEECH

BE RIGHT BACK.

splshh
splshh
NOPE... NOT A DREAM.

!!

...O

THAT'S IT. I'M OUT OF HERE...

IF THIS IS KILL OR BE KILLED, I CAN FIGURE OUT WHICH ONE IT'S GONNA BE.

WANTS ME TO STAY RIGHT ON IT.

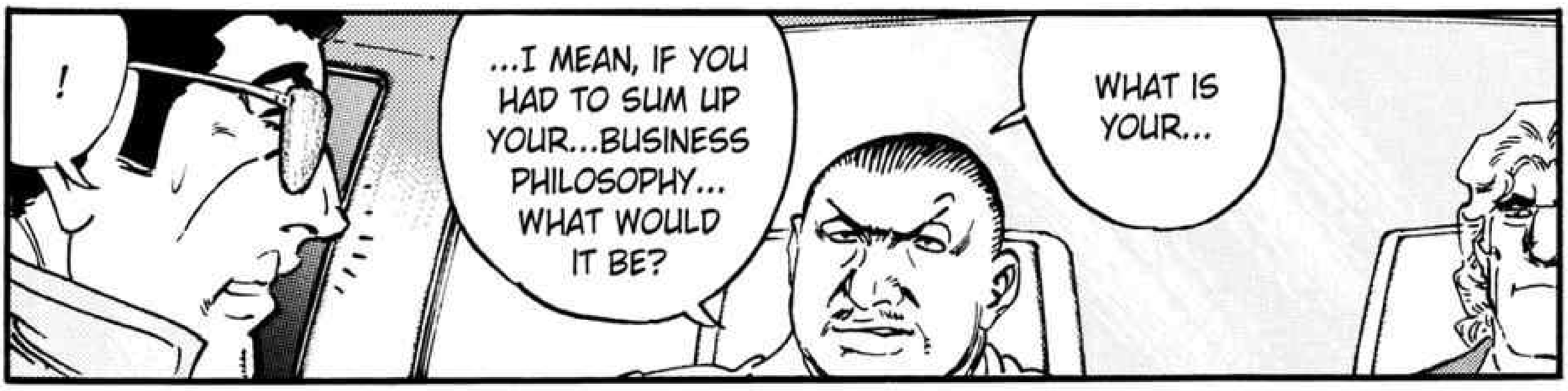
BUT SEE, IT AIN'T LIKE THAT. IT'S JUST MY BOSS...HE'S KINDA BUSTIN' MY BALLS OVER THIS ASSIGNMENT.

SEEMS LIKE TODAY'S MY DAY TO BARGE IN ON YOU IN THE BATHROOM, MR. TOGO. I KNOW WHAT YOU MUST BE THINKIN'. IS THIS GUY A FAGGOT, OR WHAT?

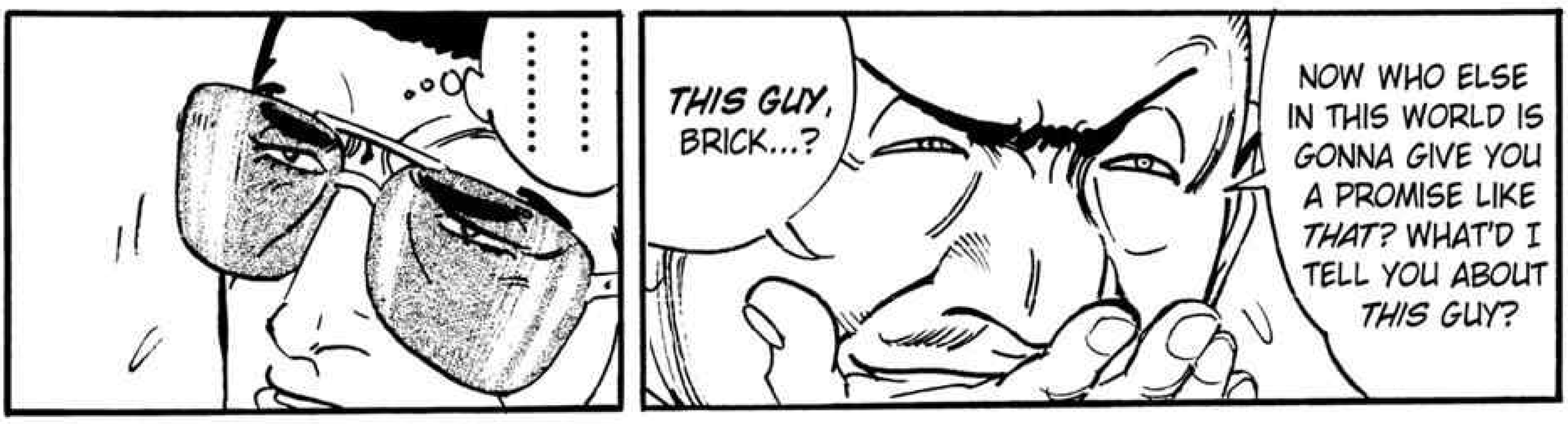
.....

I KNOW YOU DON'T LIKE WITNESSES... BUT INDULGE ME, HUH...?

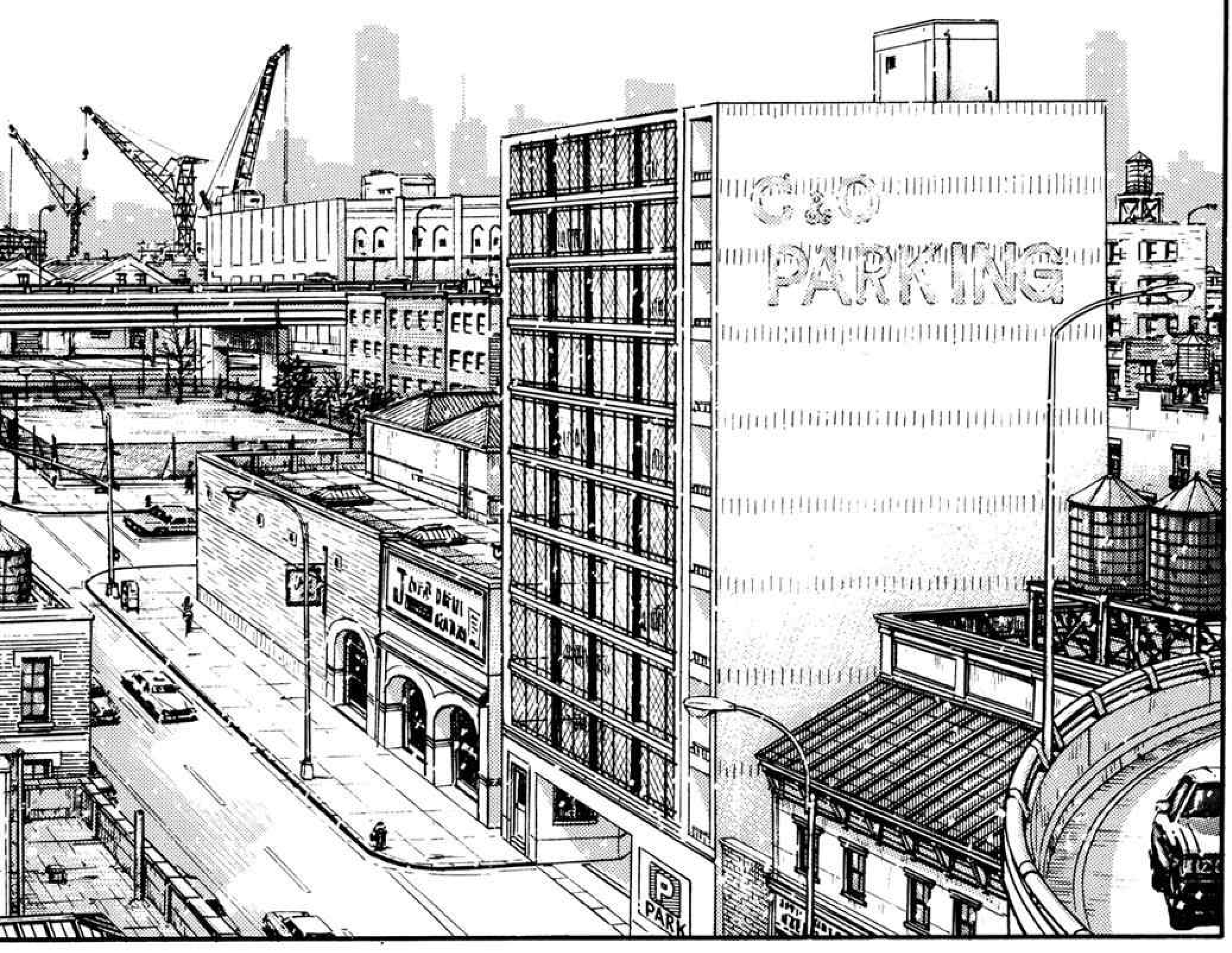
BRRR


!
...I MEAN, IF YOU HAD TO SUM UP YOUR...BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY... WHAT WOULD IT BE?
WHAT IS YOUR...

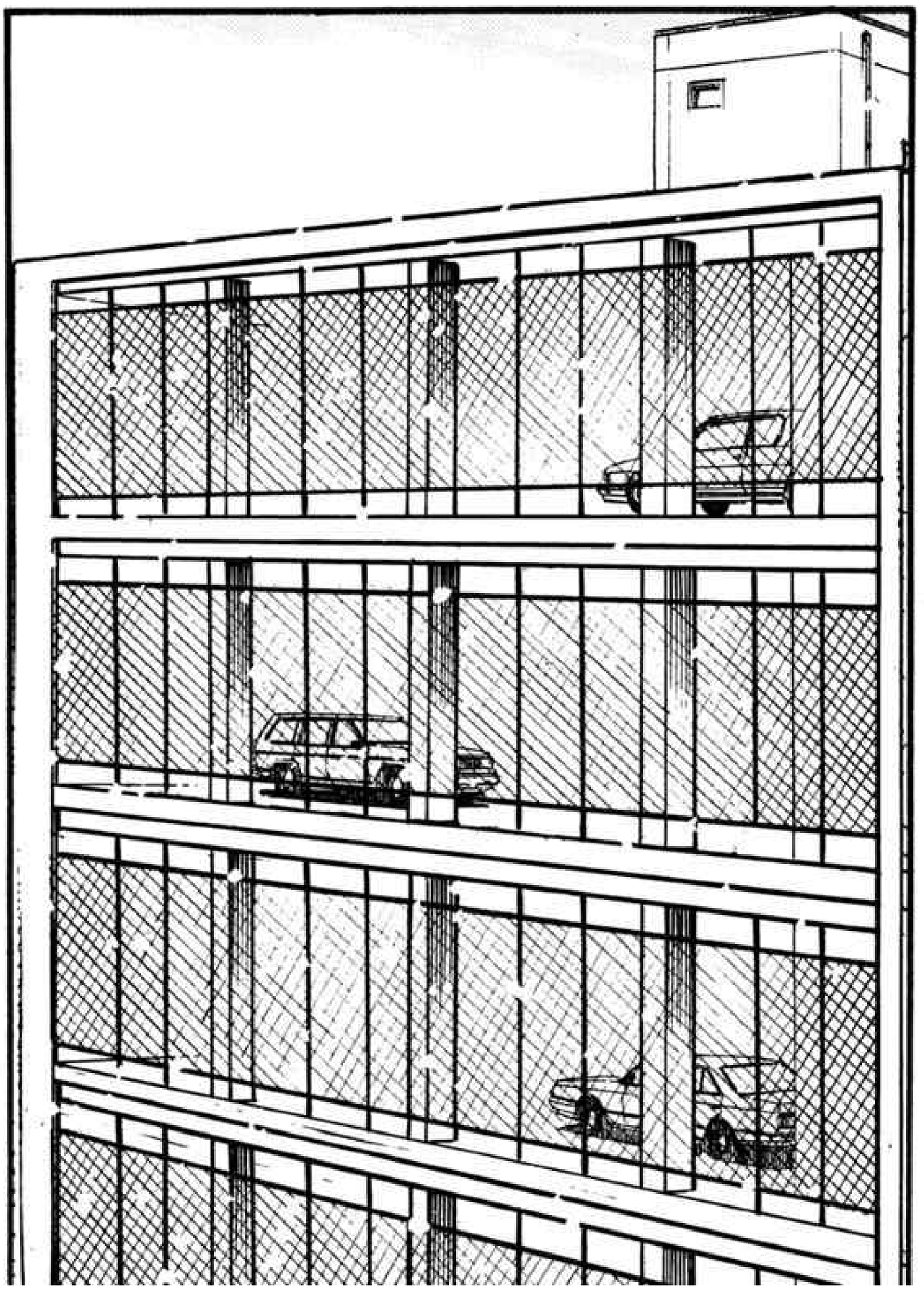
YOU HEAR THAT?
!!
"ONE HUNDRED PERCENT GUARANTEE."

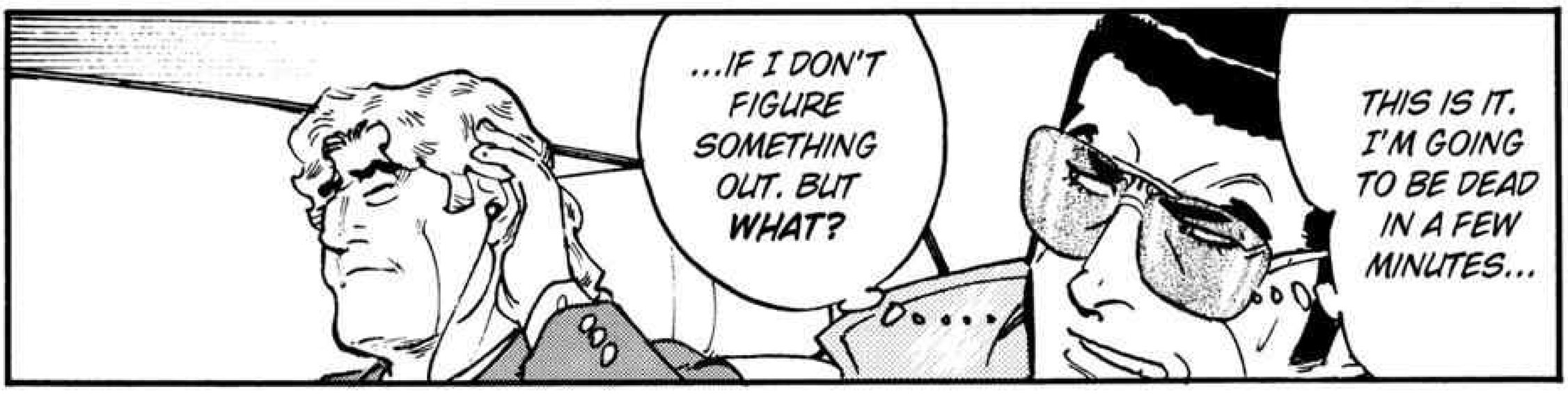

!!
THIS GUY, BRICK...?
NOW WHO ELSE IN THIS WORLD IS GONNA GIVE YOU A PROMISE LIKE THAT? WHAT'D I TELL YOU ABOUT THIS GUY?

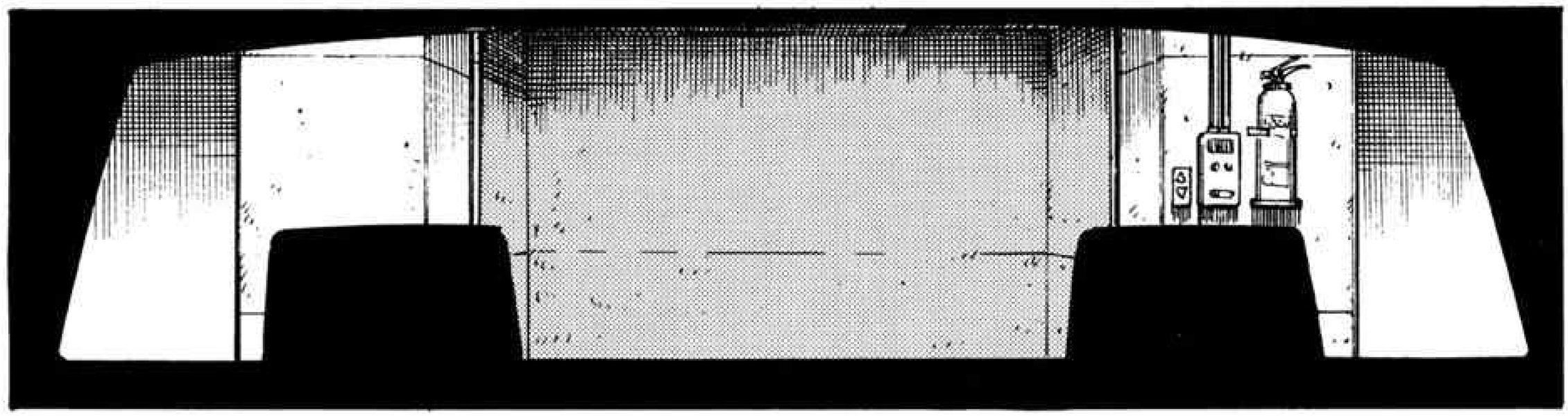
AY-YUP.
WELL, THEN... THE JOB SHOULD BE EASY.


PARKING
P
PARK

401




...IF I DON'T FIGURE SOMETHING OUT. BUT WHAT?
THIS IS IT. I'M GOING TO BE DEAD IN A FEW MINUTES...



!

...JESUS...

CAN I REALLY DO THAT...? SHOOT HIM, AND THEN GET AWAY ...?

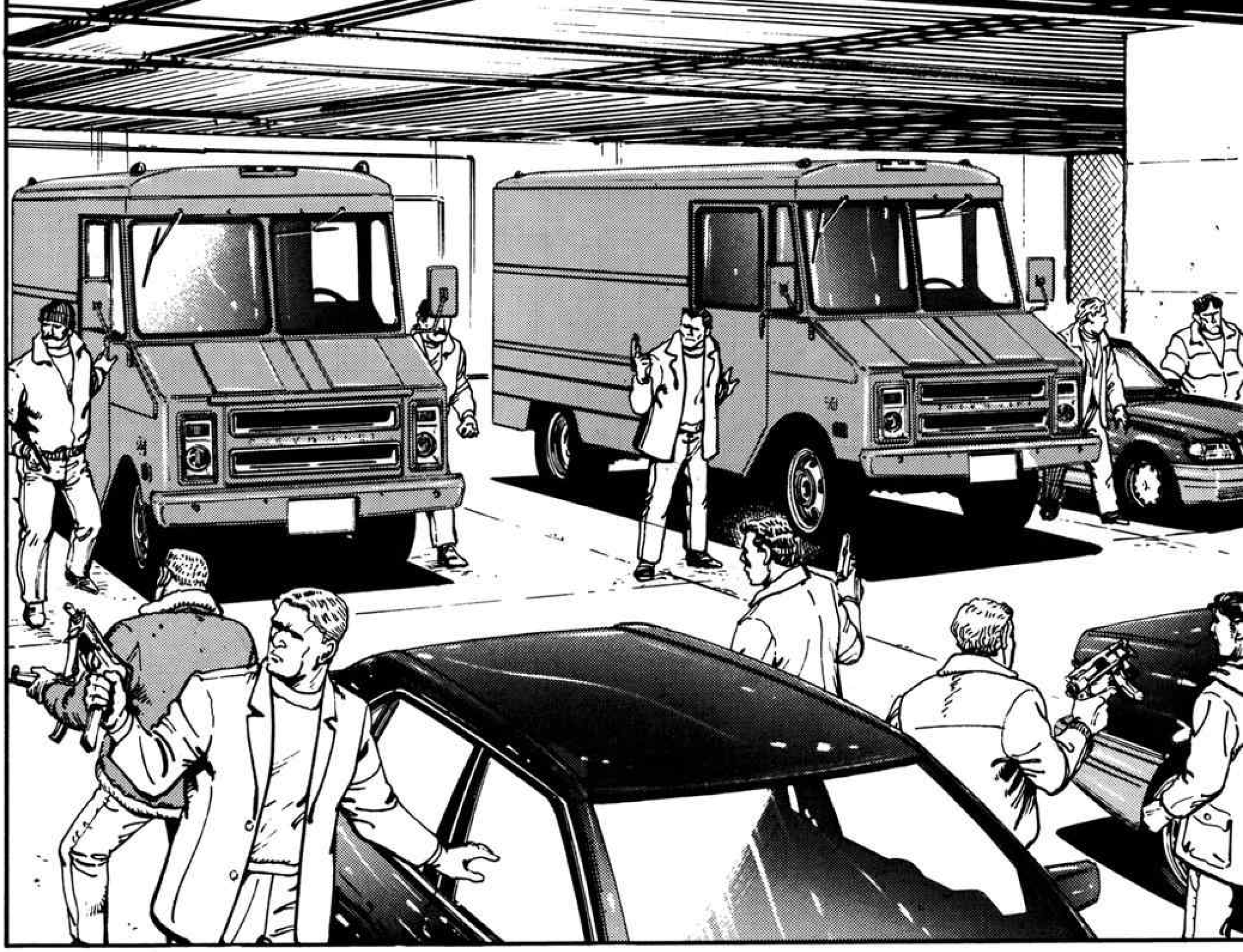
WE'RE... WE'RE ALL ALONE UP HERE... I GUESS I COULD... I COULD...

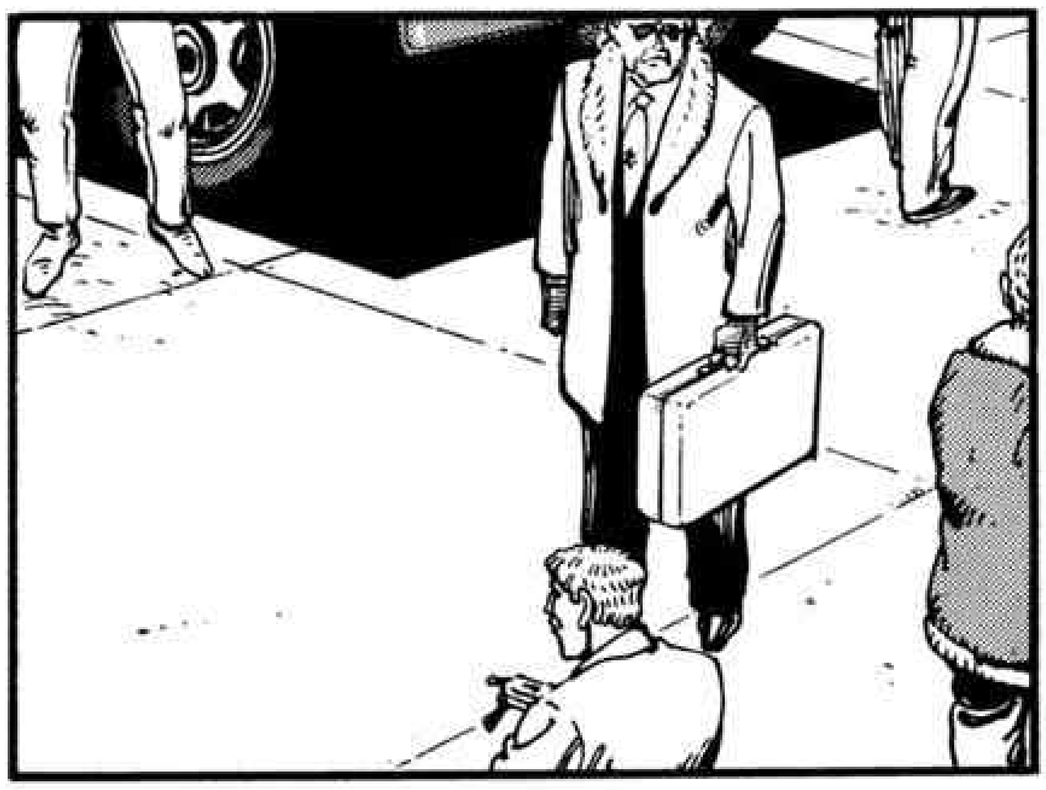
BRICK. IT'S GINO.

They're comin' into the garage now. Get ready on my word.

!!

VVVRRRRMMMMMMM





SF

OR I COULD RUN HIM DOWN...OR I COULD...
RRRRMMMM

12345678910

10F
RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRMMM

MMMM

MMMMMMMMM

ELECTRIC TOOL SALESMAN TONY TOGO FOUND DEAD IN GANG SHOOT-OUT...

...OR, I COULD JUST DIE. HOW'S THIS GOING TO LOOK IN MY OBITUARY?

VVVVVVVV

...AW, FUCK IT.

45678910

!!

GET DOWN!!

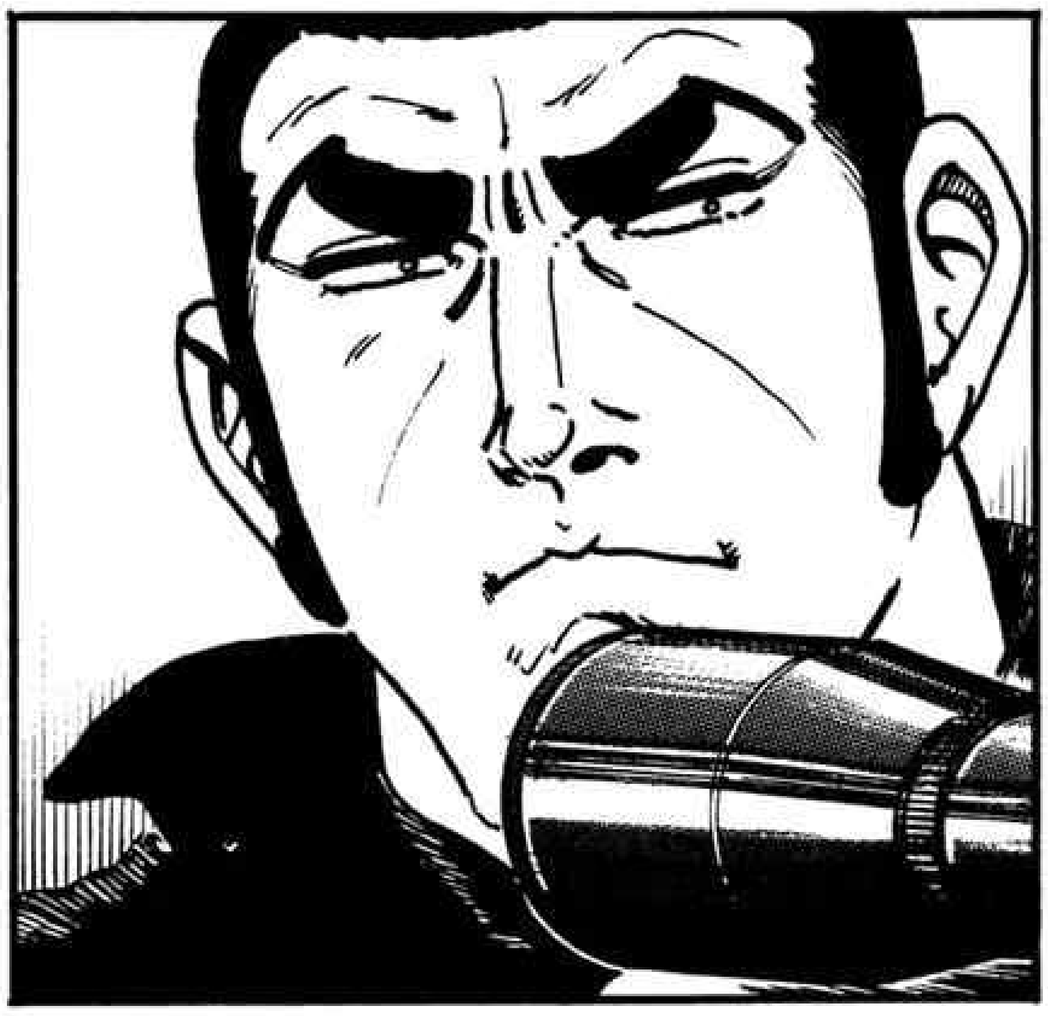
BLAM

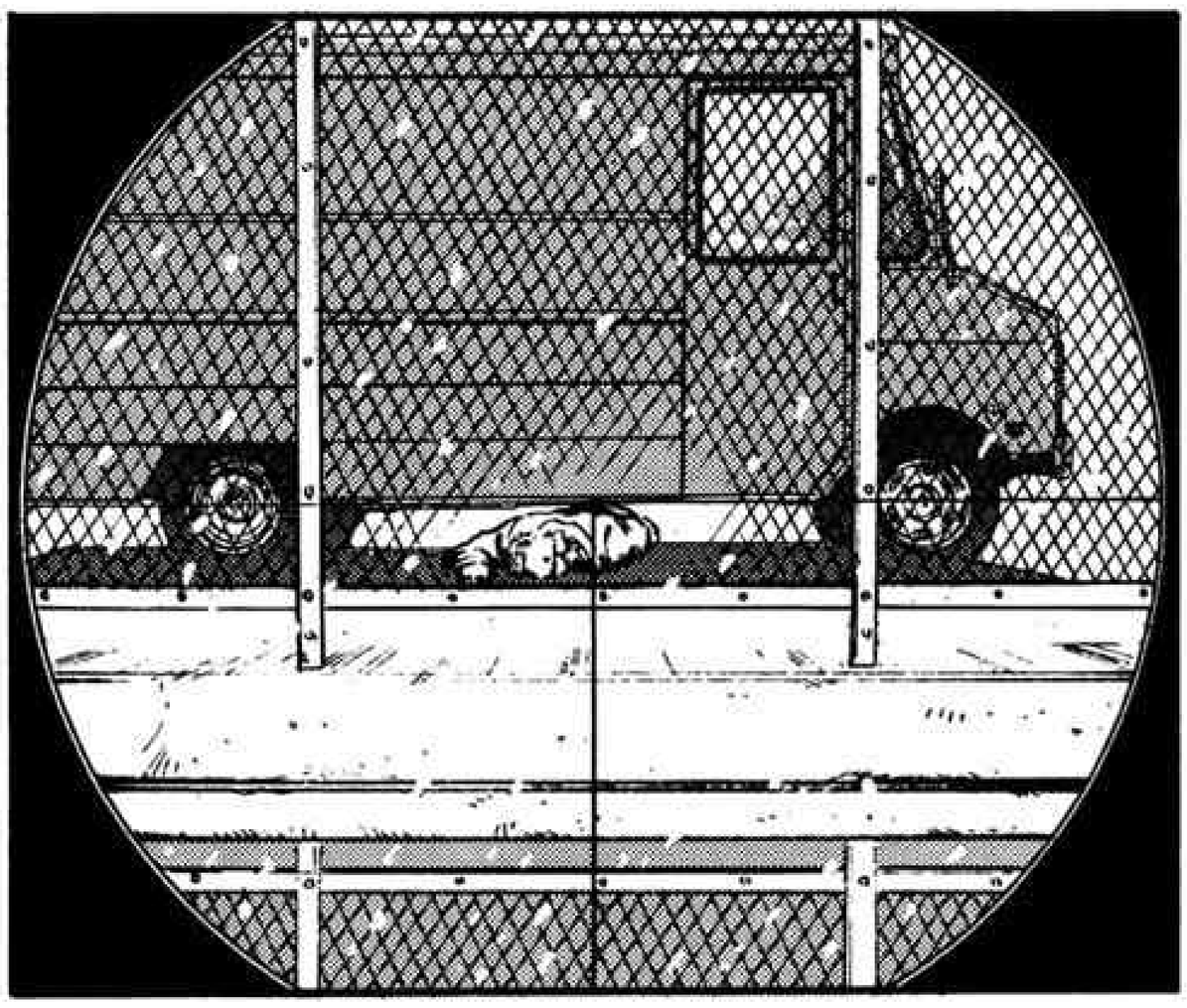
VVVV

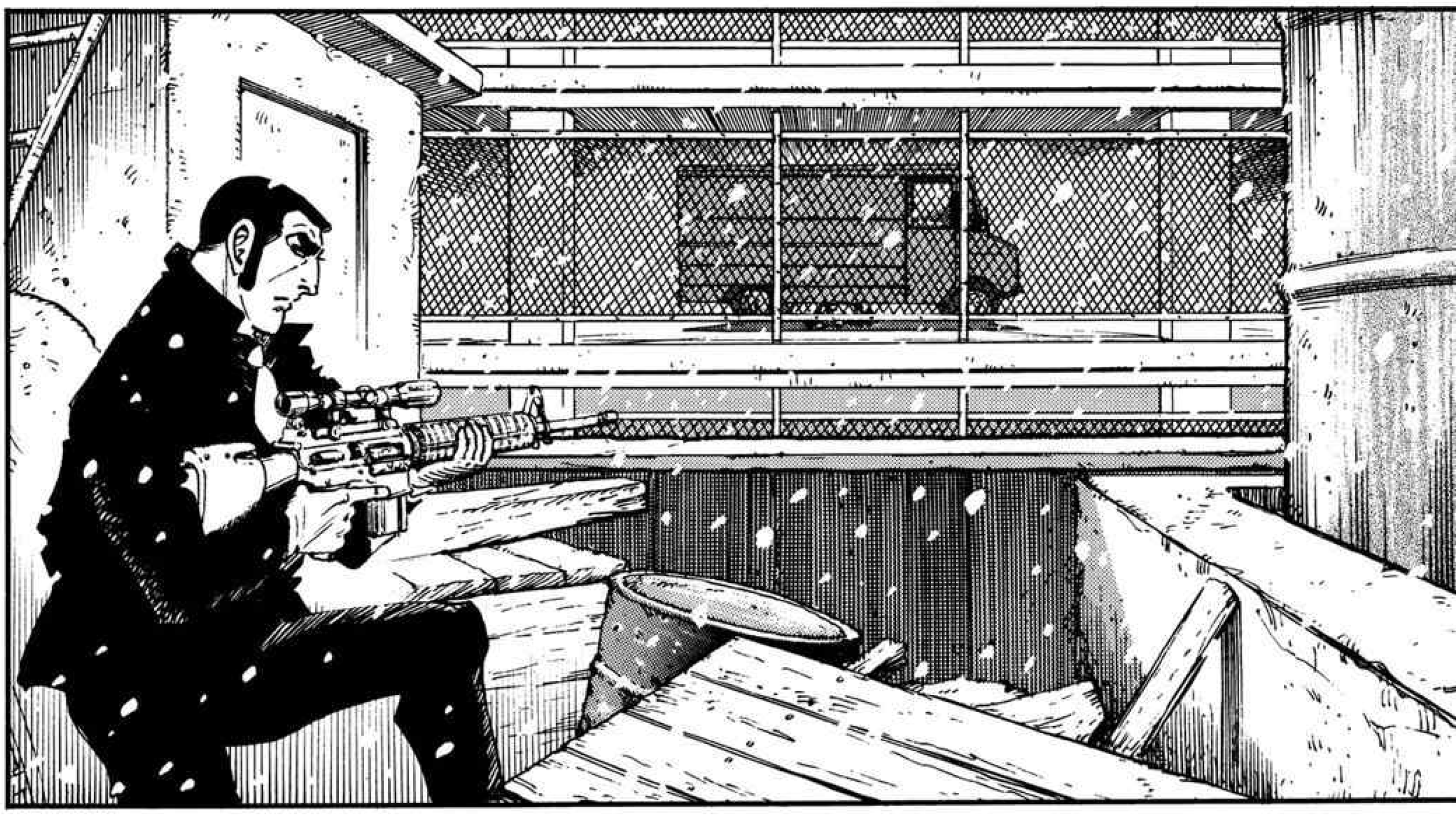
?!

WWWWSSShhhp

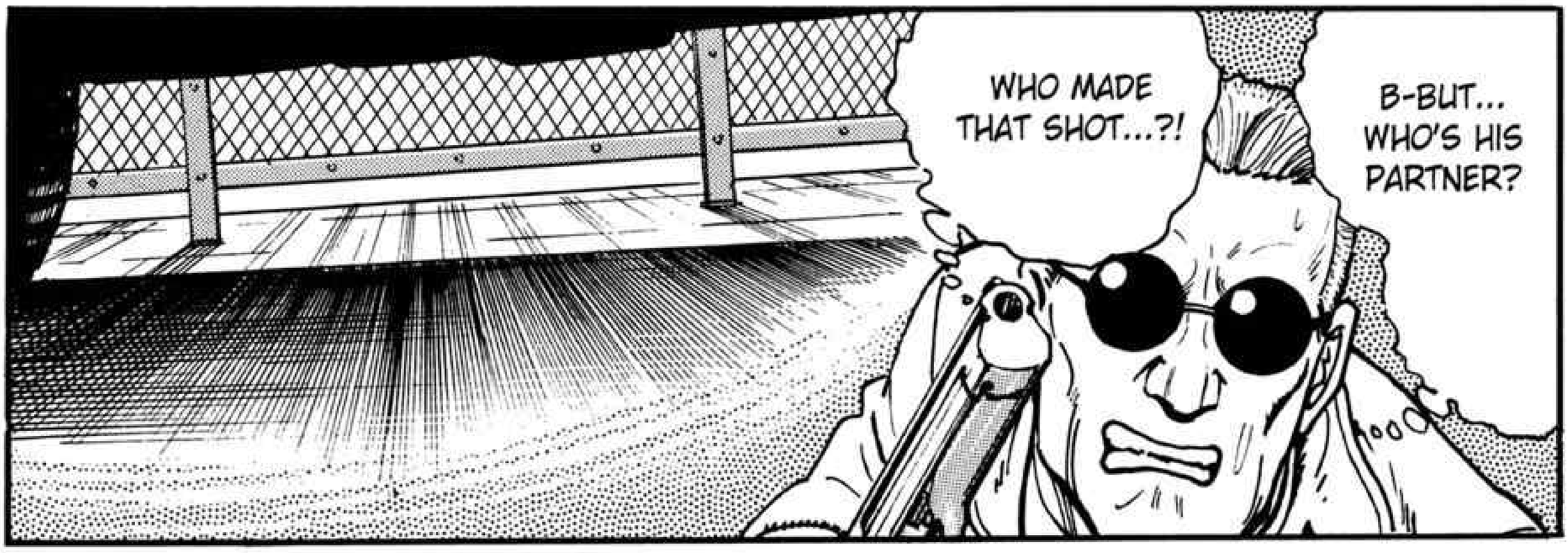
BOSS?!

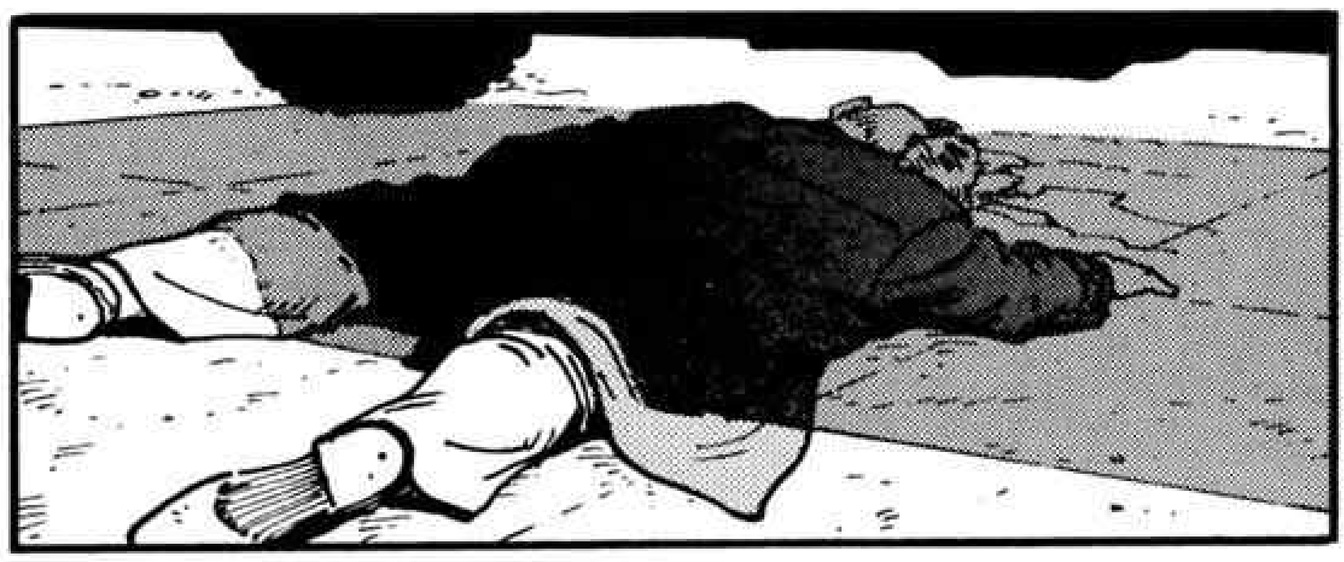




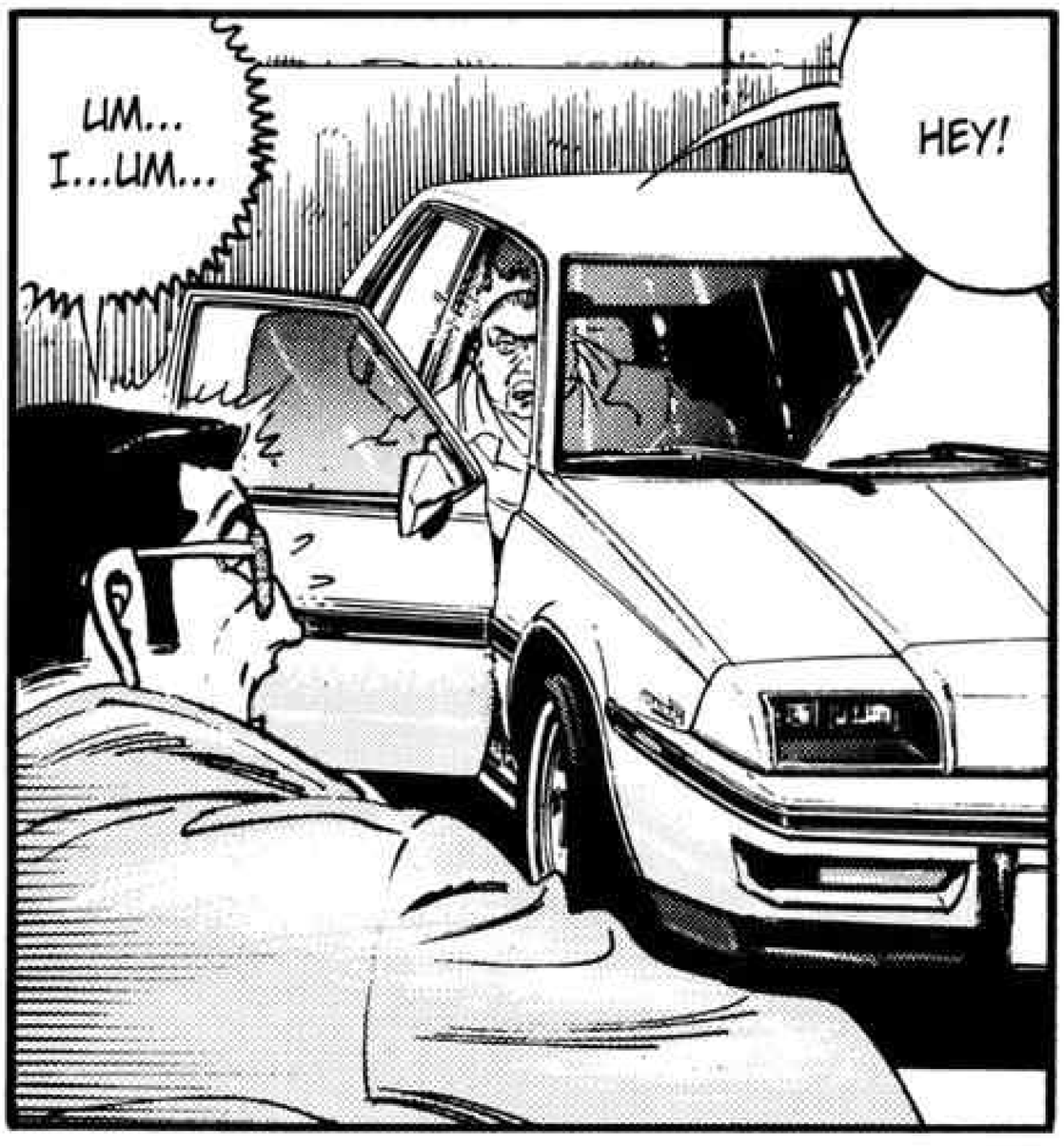


TH-THEY...THEY *WANTED* HIM TO DROP TO THE GROUND...
SHIT...*SHIT!* THE GUY IN THE CAR WAS JUST A DECOY!


WHO MADE THAT SHOT...?!
B-BUT... WHO'S HIS PARTNER?



I'M ALIVE! ALIVE! AND MY ONLY CHANCE TO STAY THAT WAY--

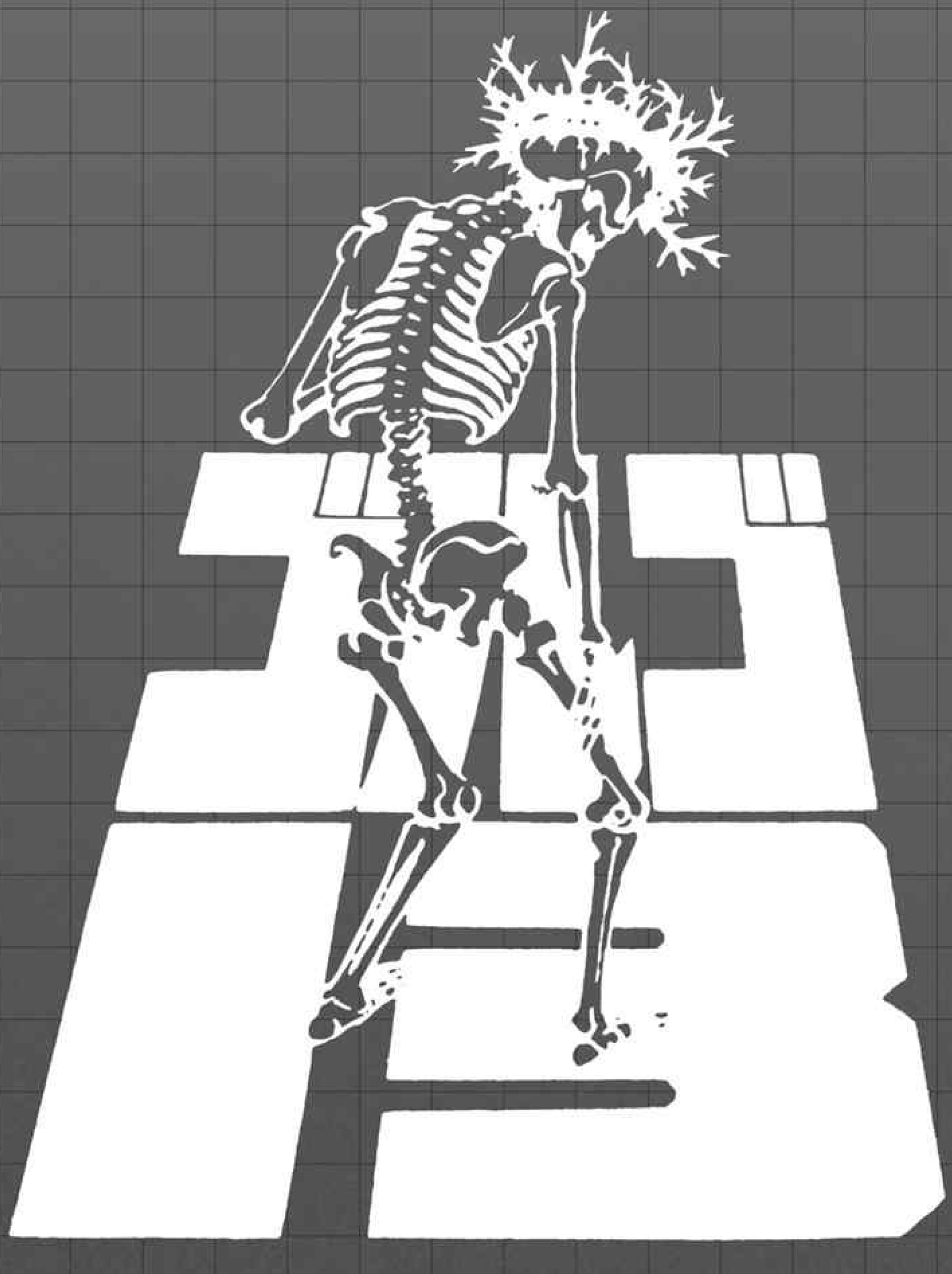

UM... I...UM...
HEY!

END

The Wrong Man
Golgo 13 Story #360, December 1996

FILE 13

Secrets of the World's Deadliest Assassin



Summary: History and profile of **GOLGO 13** (a.k.a. "Duke Togo," other aliases) since 1968; sources include former KGB, CIA, SIS, Mossad, and other world intelligence agencies.

Window at Saito Production (Saito-Pro). Golgo asks visitors to "State your business!"

Personal stock of a firearms expert staff member of Saito-Pro.

Suzuki: Basically, for Golgo, the ability to kill is a form of self-defense.

Saito: The best method of self-defense is preparation and alertness.

Suzuki: Golgo always seems to be sleeping with a lady before his job. A fighter usually doesn't have sex before fights because it affects his aggression. But for Golgo, it's more of a life-or-death battle, instead of a match, so does he feel like he needs to leave his seed behind?

Saito: [Laughs] No such thoughts. He commits the act in order to become extra calm. Simply for that. He would get distracted on the job if he had any physical desires unfulfilled, such as hunger. In order to make the most logical, calm assessment of a challenge, he needs to satisfy any instinctive needs first. Provided he keeps himself trained and in shape, the amount of energy lost from sex is not a problem.

Suzuki: But would he not lose his aggression?

Saito: Golgo never has any aggression to begin with. It's only something he brings out when the situation warrants it.

Suzuki: I guess it's not something that is lost simply by sleeping with a girl.

In 1975's Story 92, "The Man With The Curve," Golgo's target is killed not by his bullet, but by a small pen-shaped bomb placed into his pocket by Golgo which explodes when hit by the bullet. Sort of feels like cheating.

Interview by Kunio Suzuki

Saito: It's simply because we can't maintain a society in such a way, that we create laws. But look anywhere in the Criminal Code of Japan, and you'll never find anything that says "You may not kill another person." What it says instead is what will happen to you should you kill a another person. It's always a promise. It only becomes more complicated once we start to classify acts as "good" and "evil." Good and evil are made up to fit whatever suits the needs at the time. Let's make this good, and this evil.

Suzuki: Wow. You've thought about it quite a lot.

Saito: That's why *Golgo 13* was born.

Suzuki: You once said that none of your emotions are projected through Golgo, but it seems to me you two are almost one and the same.

Saito: Well, I force my philosophy onto Golgo.

Suzuki: By that, do you mean your ideology?

Saito: I can't say it's my ideology. If someone like this actually existed, he wouldn't last three days.

Suzuki: He's extremely stoic, and he needs to go through excruciating training. Whenever violence is depicted, there are complaints about negative influence on the kids. But people don't make that complaint about *Golgo 13*, do they?

Saito: It's a mystery.

Suzuki: I suppose it's because what Golgo does isn't something you can just imitate. It's not like they're going to read *Golgo 13* and become delinquents. In fact, it may actually nurture better behavior [laughs]. *Golgo 13* should be used as a morals textbook [laughs].

Saito: I believe that being stoic is the epitome of male beauty. How much can one bear. It's not that I'm depicting my ideology, but I want to depict a man who needs to be stoic to this extremity. I couldn't do what he does myself.

Suzuki: Is that so? I came here today, being excited about asking you about martial arts. Minoru Suzuki, a wrestler from Pancrase (a syncretic school of fighting that takes its name from the ancient Greek style known as the *Pankration*; their English site is at http://www.pancrase.co.jp/en/index.html) is saying Golgo is a genius in martial arts. Things like how he's always using his knees and elbows in order to not damage his wrists. When I read this, I was moved, because I personally like the martial arts, and have been practicing judo. I think you get story advice from professionals in medicine and agriculture, but do you consult anyone on martial arts?

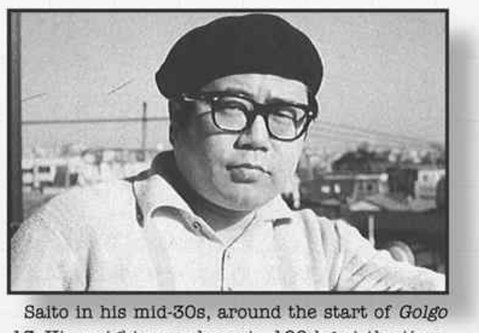
Saito: I have never consulted anyone about it.

Suzuki: Oh, really? Even for the episode where Combat Sambo is portrayed?

Saito: That represents an exception. Whenever there's a specific martial art to be depicted, I have. When I was younger, I was into boxing, and attended a boxing gym. It served to allow me to realize how unfit I was to be doing it, so I quit. Apparently I have a short reach, and have too many areas to be struck in, making my body unsuitable for boxing [laughs]. I couldn't drop my weight...I liked boxing, so I'm sure I had some degree of consciousness toward martial arts. How one could hit another to make it hurt the most, for example.

GOLGO 13
INTERVIEW WITH TAKAO SAITO, PART TWO

Takao Saito, age 16, in front of the family barber shop.



Saito in his mid-30s, around the start of *Golgo 13*. His weight was closer to 100 kg at the time.

Saito at age 43 with his best friend, manga pioneer Shotaro Ishinomori (1938-1998), creator of *Cyborg 009* and *Kamen Rider*.

The plaque at Saito Production (Saito-Pro).

Saito: Togo-sensei was my middle school teacher. He was the one person who understood me to a certain degree. He was the one that taught me what society meant, and what the rules of society were. I didn't take any tests during my three years in middle school. I thought of them as quizzes. There are no real tests in school. You can't judge a person's knowledge and abilities that way. When Togo-sensei became my new teacher, I turned in the answer sheet completely blank, just like I always did. So he brought it back to my desk, and I thought he was going to lecture me like every other teacher had. I was ready to talk back to him. But instead, he just put the sheet down and said that how I chose to turn it in was my own will, and that was fine. But to show that the decision was mine, I had a duty to sign my name to the blank sheet. It made a real impression on me. I suddenly understood, that these are the rules. After that, I began to really think about where a person's responsibility lies and what the rules are.

Suzuki: Is the body language of Golgo from him too?

Saito: No, I only borrowed the name. The face is different also.

Suzuki: Have you had any instances where you've changed from writing *Golgo 13*?

Saito: Not that I know of.

Suzuki: Do you ever go back and read your work once it gets printed and leaves your hands?

Saito: Of course I do.

Suzuki: When I read *Golgo 13*, I get so excited I sometimes feel like turning around and punching the person behind me.

Saito: [laughs] That's not good.

Suzuki: Is there anything like that with you?

Many of the prostitutes Golgo has been with refer to themselves by the word "atai" (a contraction of the more conventional feminine word for "I," "atashi" that has various connotations of use, including association with little girls, the lower class, and as an archaism). We can say that Golgo has a high "atai" rate.

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Saito: I think so. At least, I think it allows for a clearer assessment.

Suzuki: He's the ideal male. He can defeat the most powerful foes, knows every language, can make analytical judgments, and is good at sex.

Saito: Hahahaha!

Suzuki: It is said that Golgo's image is based on the actor Ken Takakura.

Saito: Yes. I constantly base my characters on existing people, since it's easier to visualize the character as a real person.. So Golgo is the Ken Takakura of 30 years ago.

Suzuki: *Golgo 13* has been made into a live-action movie twice, starring Ken Takakura and Sonny Chiba respectively. I'm sorry to be rude...but the movies seem like failures, and the gekiga seems much better...

Saito: It's not rude at all. I feel the same way myself.

Suzuki: Is that true?! What made you authorize these movies?

Saito: I actually was against it, telling them not to do it. Even then, the people from Toei just kept going at me, so I okayed it—with the conditions that it be filmed completely overseas and that it star Ken Takakura as Golgo...since he was with Toei, and I drew Golgo in his image, after all. But I was bluffing. I thought they couldn't do a full production overseas. Then, they said they could.

Suzuki: So Toei met your conditions [laughs].

Saito: Then I reluctantly went ahead, and decided I'd write the film. So I did the original script. But when that script was turned into a movie, to my surprise, something completely different ended up there on screen. I had to wonder what part of my script they actually used. I had wanted to emphasize the Golgo-ness and wrote many scenes with that kind of detail. For example, to specify that the rifle shell should be ejected abruptly, then fall into the water, and then slowly disappear—that sort of thing. All those sort of details were cut. Instead, they had a scene where Golgo was walking around aimlessly in the desert with an unshrouded gun. If he did something like that, sand would get into the rifle and make it inoperable. They were being insensitive to the character. I thought, If they're going to do it that way, why does it have to be with Golgo?

Suzuki: The people filming it probably had the very simple assumption that since it's a hit gekiga, it will be a hit movie.

Saito: Whenever there's talk about making a movie, I always oppose it. Because if my concept can be done in a movie, then there's no need to draw it as a gekiga. Gekiga and movies express things in a completely different way. Gekiga are not fit for movies.

Suzuki: There are worlds that can be depicted only because the format chosen is gekiga.

Saito: Exactly.

Suzuki: Golgo's name, "Duke Togo," surprisingly, is from Togo-sensei, a person you owe a lot to. I had always thought it was from Gensui Togo (referring to *gensui* [a rank, depending on context, corresponding either to Field Marshal or Admiral of the Fleet, in this case the latter] Heihachiro Togo, who commanded the Japanese fleet that defeated Russia in the Battle of Tsushima in 1905, marking the arrival of Japan as a factor in world power—*ed.*)

But I think rather that this freedom came from his professionalism as a graphic novelist, and from his stoicism. I realized this as I talked with him. He has made every effort to not get involved in politics. He has declined every offer to support a certain figure, or be the speaker at some sort of gathering. Though he says "Please don't view Golgo and me as the same people," his sense of professional pride and forbearance are qualities they share. He says that he doesn't even consider scripts that are polemical. It's not something that's done easily. He's remained free from the demands of eras, and the winds that blow a different way tomorrow. That is why we continue to read his work.

Presently, a movement to "regain the national pride" is very active within Japan. However, Golgo is beyond even self-pride, or self-hate. The world has constantly wavered between left and right, but Golgo does not waver. And at the deepest level in this manga, a question is present: "Should Japan remain this way?" You can see it asked in many stories—whether they address the secrets surrounding the end of the war or the later battles over agricultural policy or computers.

There are definitely fine Japanese. And there are filthy Japanese, who deserve to be spat out. This is just the way it is, but we try to lump such people into such categories like "Nation-Loving" or "Anti-Japan." Quite idiotic. Instead, I'd like to force them to read *Golgo 13*. There was a story where Golgo received an offer to shoot a famous painting, rather than to have it fall into the hands of a filthy Japanese. He accepted the job without hesitation. I was trembling as I read it. This was not being "Anti-Japan"—this was patriotism, anger towards Japan as it is.

There is a great love here, beyond countries, in the work written by the sensei. There is a great passion here, in this vast cultural essay. You should want to re-read the entire series in that spirit.

"The man who learned what's important in life from *Golgo*." Kunio Suzuki (r.) attempts a two and a half hour-long interview.

[Editor's postscript: In his book *Japan Unbound: A Volatile Nation's Quest for Pride and Purpose*—published four years after the above interview—author John Nathan characterizes Kunio Suzuki as "an ultranationalist with powerful connections in business and government." Nathan cites provocative manga artist Yoshinori Kobayashi (whose *A Declaration of Arrogant-ism* Frederik L. Schodt profiles in *Dreamland Japan*) as crediting Suzuki for once saving him from being physically attacked by the extreme right by inviting him to a preemptive dialogue in the prominent weekly *Shukan Bunshun* in which Suzuki "went out of his way to say that Japan's ultra-nationalist movement could accommodate differing views..."—CGH]

In 1975's Story 93, "Endless Night," Golgo vaguely remembered a prostitute he had hired five years ago, even though he goes through so many. Magnificent memory!

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Saito: Nope. Absolutely nothing like that. I usually think about how the layout was poor or the structure was poor.

Suzuki: Oh, so you strictly look back at it from a professional manga creator's viewpoint. But not like striking the editor who snuck up behind you, or anything.

Saito: [laugh] That's actually the one thing I'm trying not to do. Whenever anyone new joins the staff, I tell them this: we have the same kind of relationship to our manga as fireworks makers have to fireworks. When we launch the fireworks, what we need to watch isn't the boom but the audience's reactions. We have to be in a position where we can hear what they say, whether it's "Go high!" or "How pretty!"

Suzuki: Makes sense.

Saito: The professionals aren't the fireworks themselves. And if they launch themselves up there with those fireworks, it's over. So a professional should avoid any behavior like that.

Suzuki: The rumors say that *Golgo 13* already has its final story planned out down to the very last panel, and it's hidden inside a vault.

Saito: Oh, no. It's hidden inside me.

Suzuki: Oh. Darn. I completely believed it since everything I read says it's hidden in a vault. It's not?

Saito: All the panels are planned out, and yes, the final scene. But I've got it all inside. That last story, what sort of layout and pace it shall have, is all planned out inside my head.

Suzuki: Well, what happens? He dies, right?

Saito: That's— (transcript ends)

Afterword to the Interview

I did not imagine I could hear answers with such an impact. I've read *Golgo 13* for 32 years. Before the interview, I re-read all 118 volumes [as of 2000—*ed.*] of the manga. I thought of myself as well-versed in *Golgo 13*, and even considered myself an expert on the series. However, I ended up quite surprised by my special lecture session in "Golgo-ology." It turned out I knew nothing about the character.

There are so many erroneous rumors circulating about *Golgo 13*. The series may already have become a legend, but that legend is taking on a life of its own. For example, I'd heard that the motivation behind writing *Golgo* was from watching James Bond movies. Or that the final episode is already planned out and written, locked up in a vault at the office. Or that Takao Saito wanted to portray a cool and unemotional character, since his previous heroes had been hot-headed and emotional. All false, although I had completely believed them.

The sensei spoke of Golgo trying to be a "passionate man," with passion in his words. Golgo is beyond any nation, religion, ideology, or similar cause. However, he is not a nihilist. He foresaw the present from 30 years ago. He knew today would be a world where all ideologies have fallen apart. When the series started, revolutions were thought to be right and socialistic illusions were present. It's amazing. Sensei says that if you think about it, you would know. That's why I didn't know. The whole world didn't know.

Sensei was out in the working world as soon as he left middle school. Perhaps because he wasn't involved in student demonstrations, he was also free from "ideology worship."